



Serious emotional disturbance among youths exposed to Hurricane Katrina 2 years postdisaster

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Abstract:

Objective: To estimate the prevalence of serious emotional disturbance (SED) among children and adolescents exposed to Hurricane Katrina along with the associations of SED with hurricane-related stressors, sociodemographics, and family factors 18 to 27 months after the hurricane. **Method:** A probability sample of prehurricane residents of areas affected by Hurricane Katrina was administered a telephone survey. Respondents provided information on up to two of their children (n Euro Surveillance (Bulletin Europeen Sur Les Maladies Transmissibles; European Communicable Disease Bulletin) 797) aged 4 to 17 years. The survey assessed hurricane-related stressors and lifetime history of psychopathology in respondents, screened for 12-month SED in respondents' children using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, and determined whether children's emotional and behavioral problems were attributable to Hurricane Katrina. **Results:** The estimated prevalence of SED was 14.9%, and 9.3% of the youths were estimated to have SED that is directly attributable to Hurricane Katrina. Stress exposure was associated strongly with SED, and 20.3% of the youths with high stress exposure had hurricane-attributable SED. Death of a loved one had the strongest association with SED among prehurricane residents of New Orleans, whereas exposure to physical adversity had the strongest association in the remainder of the sample. Among children with stress exposure, parental psychopathology and poverty were associated with SED. **Conclusions:** The prevalence of SED among youths exposed to Hurricane Katrina remains high 18 to 27 months after the storm, suggesting a substantial need for mental health treatment resources in the hurricane-affected areas. The youths who were exposed to hurricane-related stressors, have a family history of psychopathology, and have lower family incomes are at greatest risk for long-term psychiatric impairment. J. Am. Acad. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry, 2009; 48(11):1069-1078. © 2009 American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

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Resource Description

Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Public

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event, Human Conflict/Displacement, Human Conflict/Displacement

Extreme Weather Event: Hurricanes/Cyclones

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Ocean/Coastal

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

United States

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Mental Health/Stress

Mental Health Effect/Stress: Childhood Behavioral Disorder, Stress Disorder

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern:

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Children, Low Socioeconomic Status, Racial/Ethnic Subgroup

Other Racial/Ethnic Subgroup: Not specified

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content